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GENERAL OPLE AND LADY CAMPER.

BY

GEORGE MEREDITH,

AUTHOR OF "CHLOE," "DIANA OF THE CROSSWAYS," "THE EGOIST," ETC., ETC.

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The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper.

CHAPTER I.

An excursion beyond the immediate suburbs of London, projected long before his pony-carriage was hired to conduct him, in fact, ever since his retirement from active service, led General Ople across a famous common, with which he fell in love at once, to a lofty highway along the borders of a park, for which he promptly exchanged his heart, and so gradually within a stone's-throw or so of the river-side, where he determined not solely to bestow his affections but to settle for life. It may be seen that he was of an impulsive temperament, though he had thought fit to loosen his sword-belt. The pony-carriage, however, had been hired for the very special purpose of helping him to pass in review the

lines of what he called country houses, cottages, or even sites for building, not too remote from sweet London; and as when Coelebs goes forth intending to pursue and obtain, there is no doubt of his bringing home a wife, the circumstance that there stood a house to let, in an airy situation, at a certain distance in hail of the metropolis he worshiped, was enough to kindle the general's enthusiasm. He would have taken the first he saw had it not been for his daughter, who accompanied, and at the age of eighteen was about to undertake the management of his house. Fortune, under Elizabeth Ople's guiding restraint, directed him to an epitome of the comforts. The place he fell upon is only to be described in the tongue of auctioneers, and for the first week after taking it he modestly followed them by terming it *bijou*. In time, when his own imagination, instigated by a state of something more than mere contentment, had been at work on it, he chose the happy phrase "a gentlemanly residence." For it was, he de-

clared, a small estate. There was a lodge to it, resembling two sentry-boxes forced into union, where in one half an old couple sat bent, in the other half lay compressed; there was a back-drive to discoverable stables; there was a bit of grass that would have appeared a meadow if magnified; and there was a wall round the kitchen garden and a strip of wood round the flower garden. The prying of the outside world was impossible. Comfort, fortification, and gentlemanliness made the place, as the general said, an ideal English home.

The compass of the estate was half an acre, and perhaps a perch or two, just the size for the hugging love General Ople was happiest in giving. He wisely decided to retain the old couple at the lodge, whose members were used to restriction, and also not to purchase a cow, that would have wanted pasture. With the old man, while the old woman attended to the bell at the handsome front entrance with its gilt spiked gates, he undertook to do the gardening—a business he delighted in, so long

as he could perform it in a gentlemanly manner; that is to say, so long as he was not overlooked. He was perfectly concealed from the road. Only one house, and curiously indeed, only one window of the house, and further to show the protection extended to Douro Lodge, that window an attic, overlooked him. And the house was empty.

The house (for who can hope, and who should desire a commodious house with conservatories, aviaries, pond, and boat-shed, and other joys of wealth, to remain unoccupied) was taken two seasons later by a lady of whom Fame, rolling like a dust-cloud from the place she had left, reported that she was eccentric. The word is uninstructive; it does not frighten. In a lady of a certain age it is rather a characteristic of aristocracy in retirement. And at least it implies wealth.

General Ople was very anxious to see her. He had the sentiment of humble respectfulness toward aristocracy, and there was that in riches which roused his admiration. London,

for instance, he was not afraid to say he thought the wonder of the world. He remarked, in addition, that the sacking of London would suffice to make every common soldier of the foreign army of occupation an independent gentleman for the term of his natural days. But this is a nightmare! said he, startling himself with an abhorrent dream of envy of those enriched invading officers: for Booty is the one lovely thing which the military mind can contemplate in the abstract. His habit was to go off in an explosion of heavy sighs when he had delivered himself so far, like a man at war with himself.

The lady arrived in time: she received the cards of the neighborhood, and signalized her eccentricity by paying no attention to them, excepting the card of a Mrs. Baerens, who had audience of her at once. By express arrangement, the card of General Wilson Ople, as her nearest neighbor, followed the card of the rector, the social head of the district; and the rector was granted an interview, but Lady

Camper was not at home to General Ople. "She is of superior station to me, and may not wish to associate with me," the general modestly said.

Nevertheless, he was wounded; for in spite of himself, and without the slightest wish to obtrude his own person, as he explained the meaning that he had in him, his rank in the British army forced him to be the representative of it in the absence of any one of a superior rank. So that he was professionally hurt, and his heart being in his profession, it may be honestly stated that he was wounded in his feelings, though he said no, and insisted on the distinction. Once a day his walk for constitutional exercise compelled him to pass before Lady Camper's windows, which were not bashfully withdrawn, as he said humorously of Douro Lodge, in the seclusion of half-pay, but bowed out imperiously, militarily, like a generalissimo on horseback, and had full command of the road and levels up to the swelling park foliage. He went by at a smart stride,

with a delicate depression of his upright bearing, as though hastening to greet a friend in view, whose hand was getting ready for the shake. This much would have been observed by a house-maid; and considering his fine figure and the peculiar shining silveriness of his hair, the acceleration of his gait was noticeable. When he drove by, the pony's right ear was flicked to the extreme indignation of the mettlesome little animal. It ensued in consequence that the general was borne flying under the eyes of Lady Camper, and such pace displeasing him, he reduced it invariably at a step or two beyond the corner of her grounds.

But neither he nor his daughter Elizabeth attached importance to so trivial a circumstance. The general punctiliously avoided glancing at the windows during the passage past them, whether in his wild career or on foot. Elizabeth took a side-shot as one looks at a way-side tree. Their speech concerning Lady Camper was an exchange of commonplaces over her loneliness; and this condition

of hers was the more perplexing to General Ople on his hearing from his daughter that the lady was very fine-looking, and not so very old, as he had fancied eccentric ladies must be.

The rector's account of her, too, excited the mind. She had informed him bluntly that she now and then went to church to save appearances, but was not a church-goer, finding it impossible to support the length of the service; might, however, be reckoned in subscriptions for all the charities, and left her pew open to poor people, and none but the poor. She had traveled over Europe, and knew the East.

Sketches in water-colors of the scenes she had visited adorned her walls, and a pair of pistols, that she had found useful, she affirmed, lay on the writing-desk in her drawing-room. General Ople gathered from the rector that she had a great contempt for men; yet it was curiously varied with lamentations over the weakness of women. "Really she can not

possibly be an example of that," said the general, thinking of the pistols.

Now we learn from those who have studied women on the chess-board, and know what ebony or ivory will do along particular lines, or hopping, that men much talked about will take possession of their thoughts; and certainly the fact may be accepted for one of their moves. But the whole fabric of our knowledge of them, which we are taught to build on this originally acute perception, is shattered when we hear that it is exactly the same, in the same degree, in proportion to the amount of work they have to do, exactly the same with men and their thoughts in the case of women much talked about. So it was with General Ople, and nothing is left for me to say except that there is broader ground than the chess-board. I am earnest in protesting the similarity of the singular couples on common earth, because otherwise the general is in peril of the accusation that he is a feminine character; and not simply was he a gallant

officer and a veteran in gunpowder strife, he was also (and it is an extraordinary thing that a genuine humility did not prevent it, and did survive it) a lord and conqueror of the sex. He had done his pretty bit of mischief, all in the way of honor, of course, but hearts had knocked. And now, with his bright white hair, his close-brushed white whiskers on a face burned brown, his clear-cut features, and a winning droop of his eyelids, there was powder in him still—if not shot.

There was a lamentable susceptibility to ladies' charms. On the other hand, for the protection of the sex, a remainder of shyness kept him from active enterprise, and in the state of suffering so long as indications of encouragement were wanting. He had killed the soft ones who came to him, attracted by the softness in him, to be killed; but clever women alarmed and paralyzed him. Their aptitude to question and require immediate, sparkling answers; their demand for fresh wit of a kind that is not furnished by publications

which strike it into heads with a hammer, and supply it wholesale; their various reading; their power of ridicule too, made them awful in his contemplation.

Supposing—for the inflammable officer was now thinking, and deeply thinking, of a clever woman—supposing that Lady Camper's pistols were needed in her defense one night! at the first report proclaiming her extremity, valor might gain an introduction to her upon easy terms, and would not be expected to be witty. She would, perhaps, after the excitement, admit his masculine superiority in the beautiful old fashion by fainting in his arms. Such was the reverie he passingly indulged, and only so could he venture to hope for an acquaintance with the formidable lady who was his next neighbor. But the proud society of the burglarious denied him opportunity.

Meanwhile he learned that Lady Camper had a nephew, and the young gentleman was in a cavalry regiment. General Ople met him outside his gates, received and returned a

polite salute, liked his appearance and manners, and talked of him to Elizabeth, asking her if by chance she had seen him. She replied that she believed that she had, and praised his horsemanship. The general discovered that he was an excellent sculler. His daughter was rowing him up the river when the young gentleman shot by with a splendid stroke, in an outrigger, backed, and floating alongside presumed to enter into conversation, during which he managed to express regrets at his aunt's turn for solitariness. As they belonged to sister branches of the same service, the general and Mr. Reginald Rolles had a theme in common, and a passion.

Elizabeth told her father that nothing afforded her so much pleasure as to hear him talk with Mr. Rolles on military matters. General Ople assured her that it pleased him likewise. He began to spy about for Mr. Rolles, and it sometimes occurred that they conversed across the wall—it could hardly be avoided. A hint or two, an undefinable flying

allusion, gave the general to understand that Lady Camper had not been happy in her marriage. He was pained to think of her misfortune; but as she was not over forty, the disaster was, perhaps, not irremediable; that is to say, if she could be taught to extend her forgiveness to men and abandon her solitude. "If," he said to his daughter, "Lady Camper should by any chance be induced to contract a second alliance, she would, one might expect, be humanized, and we should have highly agreeable neighbors."

Elizabeth artlessly hoped for such an event to take place.

She rarely differed with her father, up to whom, taking example from the world around him, she looked as the pattern of a man of wise conduct.

And he was one; and though modest, he was in good humor with himself, approved himself, and could say that, without boasting of success, he was a satisfied man until he met his touchstone in Lady Camper.

CHAPTER II.

THIS is the pathetic matter of my story, and it requires pointing out, because he never could explain what it was that seemed to him so cruel in it, for he was no brilliant son of fortune; he was no great pretender; none of those who are logically displaced from the heights they have been raised to, manifestly created to show the moral in Providence. He was modest, retiring, humbly contented; a gentlemanly residence appeased his ambition. Popular he could own that he was, but not meteorically; rather by reason of his willingness to receive light than to shed it. Why, then, was the terrible test brought to bear upon him of all men? He was one of us; no worse, and not strikingly or perilously better; and he could not but feel, in the bitterness of his reflections upon an inexplicable destiny, that the punishment befalling him, unmerited as it was, looked like absence of design in the

scheme of things above. It looked as if the blow had been dealt him by reckless chance. And to believe that was for the mind of General Ople the having to return to his alphabet and recommence the ascent of the laborious mountain of understanding.

To proceed, the general's introduction to Lady Camper was owing to a message she sent him by her gardener with a request that he would cut down a branch of a wych-elm obscuring her view across his grounds toward the river. The general consulted with his daughter, and came to the conclusion that, as he could hardly dispatch a written reply to a verbal message, yet greatly wished to subscribe to the wishes of Lady Camper, the best thing for him to do was to apply for an interview.

He sent word that he would wait on Lady Camper immediately, and betook himself forthwith to his toilet.

She was the niece of an earl!

Elizabeth commended his appearance, "passed him," as he would have said; and

well she might, for his hat, surtout, trousers and boots were worthy of an introduction to royalty. A touch of scarlet silk round the neck gave him bloom, and better than that, the blooming consciousness of it.

"You are not to be nervous, papa," Elizabeth said.

"Not at all," replied the general. "I say, not at all, my dear," he repeated, and so betrayed that he had fallen into the nervous mood. "I was saying, I have known worse mornings than this."

He turned to her and smiled brightly, nodded, and set his face to meet the future.

He was absent an hour and a half.

He came back with his radiance a little subdued, by no means eclipsed; as, when experience has afforded us matter for thought, we cease to shine dazzlingly, yet are not clouded; the rays have merely grown serener. The sum of his impressions was conveyed in the reflective utterance, "It only shows, my dear,

how different the reality is from our anticipation of it."

Lady Camper had been charming; full of condescension, neighborly, friendly, willing to be satisfied with the sacrifice of the smallest branch of the wych-elm, and only requiring that much for complimentary reasons.

Elizabeth wished to hear what they were, and she thought the request rather singular; but the general begged her to bear in mind that they were dealing with a very extraordinary woman. "Highly accomplished, really exceeding handsome," he said to himself, aloud.

The reasons were, her liking for air and view, and desire to see into her neighbor's grounds without having to mount to the attic.

Elizabeth gave a slight exclamation, and blushed.

"So, my dear, we are objects of interest to her ladyship," said the general.

He assured her that Lady Camper's manners were delightful. Stranger to tell, she knew a great deal of his antecedent history, things he had not supposed were known. "Little matters," he remarked, by which his daughter faintly conceived a reference to the conquests of his dashing days. Lady Camper had deigned to impart some of her own, incidentally: that she was of Welsh blood, and born among the mountains. "She has a romantic look," was the general's comment; and that her husband had been an insatiable traveler before he became an invalid, and had never cared for art. "Quite an extraordinary circumstance, with such a wife!" the general said.

He fell upon the wych-elm with his own hands under cover of the leafage, and the next day he paid his respects to Lady Camper, to inquire if her ladyship saw any further obstruction to the view.

"None," she replied. "And now we shall see what the two birds will do."

Apparently, then, she entertained an animosity to a pair of birds in the tree.

"Yes, yes; I say they chirp early in the morning," said General Ople.

"At all hours."

"The song of birds—" he pleaded softly for nature.

"If the nest is provided for them; but I don't like vagabond chirping."

The general perfectly acquiesced. This, in an engagement with a clever woman, is what you should do, or else you are likely to find yourself planted unawares in a high wind, your hat blown off, and your coat-tails anywhere; in other words, you will stand ridiculous in your bewilderment; and General Ople ever footed with the utmost caution to avoid that quagmire of the ridiculous. The extremer quags he had hitherto escaped; the smaller, into which he fell in his agile evasions of the big, he had hitherto been blessed in finding none to notice.

He requested her ladyship's permission to

present his daughter. Lady Camper sent in her card.

Elizabeth Ople beheld a tall, handsomely mannered lady, with good features and penetrating dark eyes, an easy carriage of her person and an agreeable voice; but (the vision of her age flashed out under the compelling eyes of youth) fifty if a day. The rich coloring confessed to it. But she was very pleasing; and Elizabeth's perception dwelt on it only because her father's manly chivalry had defended the lady against one year more than forty.

The richness of the coloring, Elizabeth feared, was artificial, and it caused her ingenuous young blood a shudder. For we are so devoted to nature when the dame is flattering us with her gifts, that we loathe the substitute, omitting to think how much less it is an imposition than a form of practical adoration of the genuine.

Our young detective, however, concealed her emotion of childish horror.

Lady Camper remarked of her: "She seems honest, and that is the most we can hope of girls."

"She is a jewel for an honest man," the general sighed, "some day!"

"Let us hope it will be a distant day."

"Yet," said the general, "girls expect to marry."

Lady Camper fixed her black eyes on him, but did not speak.

He told Elizabeth that her ladyship's eyes were exceedingly searching. "Only," said he, "as I have nothing to hide, I am able to submit to inspection," and he laughed slightly up to arresting cough, and made the mantel-piece ornaments pass muster.

General Ople was the hero to champion a lady whose airs of haughtiness caused her to be somewhat backbitten. He assured everybody that Lady Camper was much misunderstood; she was a most remarkable woman; she was a most affable and highly intelligent lady. Building up her attributes to a splendid cli-

max, he declared that she was pious, charitable, witty, and really an extraordinary artist. He laid particular stress on her artistic qualities, describing her power with the brush, her water-color sketches, and also some immensely clever caricatures. As he talked of no one else, his friends heard enough of Lady Camper, who was anything but a favorite. The Pollingtons, the Wilders, the Wardens, the Baerens, the Goslings, and others of his acquaintance, talked of Lady Camper and General Ople rather maliciously. They were all City people, and they admired the general, but mourned that he should so abjectly have fallen at the feet of a lady as red with rouge as a railway bill. His not seeing it showed the state he was in. The sister of Mrs. Pollington, an amiable widow, relict of a large City warehouseman, named Barcop, was chilled by a falling off in his attentions. His apology for not appearing at garden-parties was that he was engaged to wait on Lady Camper.

And at one time, her not condescending to exchange visits with the obsequious general was a topic fertile in irony. But she did condescend.

Lady Camper came to his gate unexpectedly, rang the bell, and was let in like an ordinary visitor. It happened that the general was gardening—not the pretty occupation of pruning, he was digging—and of necessity his coat was off, and he was hot, dusty, unpresentable.

From adoring earth as the mother of roses, you may pass into a lady's presence without purification; you can not—or so the general thought—when you are caught in the act of adoring the mother of cabbages. And though he himself loved the cabbage equally with the rose, in his heart respected the vegetable yet more than he esteemed the flower, for he gloried in his kitchen garden, this was not a secret for the world to know, and he almost heeled over on his beam ends when word was brought of the extreme honor Lady

Camper had done him. He worked his arms hurriedly into his fatigue jacket, trusting to get away to the house and spend a couple of minutes on his adornment; and with any other visitor it might have been accomplished, but Lady Camper disliked sitting alone in a room. She was on the square of lawn as the general stole along the walk. Had she kept her back to him he might have rounded her, like the shadow of a dial, undetected. She was frightfully acute of tearing. She turned while he was in the agony of hesitation, in a queer attitude, one leg on the march, projected by a frenzied tiptoe of the hinder leg, the very fatalest moment she could possibly have selected for unveiling him.

Of course there was no choice but to surrender on the spot.

He began to squander his dizzy wits in profuse apologies. Lady Camper simply spoke of the nice little nest of a garden, smelled the flowers, accepted a Niel rose and a Rohan, a Celine, a Falcot, and La France,

"A beautiful rose indeed," she said of the latter, "only it smells of macassar oil."

"Really, it never struck me. I say it never struck me before," rejoined the general, smelling it as at a pinch of snuff. "I was saying, I always—" and he tacitly, with the absurdest of smiles, begged permission to leave unterminated a sentence not in itself particularly difficult.

"I have a nose," observed Lady Camper.

Like the nobly bred person she was, according to General Ople's version of the interview on his estate, when he stood before her in his gardening costume, she put him at his ease, or she exerted herself to do so; and if he underwent considerable anguish, it was the fault of his excessive scrupulousness regarding dress, propriety, appearance.

He conducted her at her request to the kitchen garden and the handful of paddock, the stables and coach-house, then back to the lawn.

"It is the home for a young couple," she said.

"I am no longer young," the general bowed, with the sigh peculiar to this confession. "I say I am no longer young, but I call the place a gentlemanly residence. I was saying I—"

"Yes, yes!" Lady Camper tossed her head, half closing her eyes with a contraction of the brows as if in pain.

He perceived a similar expression whenever he spoke of his residence.

Perhaps it recalled happier days to enter such a nest. Perhaps it had been such a home for a young couple that she had entered on her marriage with Sir Scrope Camper, before he inherited his title and estates.

The general was at a loss to conceive what it was.

It recurred at another mention of his idea of the nature of the residence. It was almost a paroxysm. He determined not to vex her reminiscences again; and as this resolution

directed his mind to his residence, thinking it pre-eminently gentlemanly, his tongue committed the error of repeating it, with "gentleman-like" for a variation.

Elizabeth was out—he knew not where. The house-maid informed him that Miss Elizabeth was out rowing on the water.

"Is she alone?" Lady Camper inquired of him.

"I fancy so," the general replied.

"The poor child has no mother."

"It has been a sad loss to us both, Lady Camper."

"No doubt. She is too pretty to go out alone."

"I can trust her."

"Girls!"

"She has the spirit of a man."

"That is well. She has a spirit; it will be tried."

The general modestly furnished an instance or two of her spiritedness.

Lady Camper seemed to like this theme; she looked graciously interested.

"Still, you should not suffer her to go out alone," she said.

"I place implicit confidence in her," said the general; and Lady Camper gave it up.

She proposed to walk down the lanes to the river-side to meet Elizabeth returning.

The general manifested alacrity checked by reluctance. Lady Camper had told him she objected to sit in a strange room by herself; after that, he could hardly leave her to dash upstairs to change his clothes; yet how, attired as he was, in a fatigue jacket, that warned him not to imagine his back view, and held him constantly a little to the rear of Lady Camper lest she should be troubled by it; and he knew the habit of the second rank to criticise the front—how consent to face the outer world in such style side by side with the lady he admired?

"Come," said she; and he shot forward a step, looking as if he had missed fire.

"Are you not coming, general?"

He advanced mechanically.

Not a soul met them down the lanes, except a little one, to whom Lady Camper gave a small silver piece, because she was a picture.

The act of charity sunk into the general's heart, as any pretty performance will do upon a warm waxen bed.

Lady Camper surprised him by answering his thoughts. "No; it's for my own pleasure."

Presently she said: "Here they are."

General Ople beheld his daughter by the river-side at the end of the lane, under escort of Mr. Reginald Rolles.

It was another picture, and a pleasing one. The young lady and the young gentleman wore boating hats, and were both dressed in white, and standing by or just turning from the outrigger and light skiff they were about to leave in charge of a waterman. Elizabeth stretched a finger at arm's-length, issuing directions, which Mr. Rolles took up and

worded further to the man for the sake of emphasis; and he, rather than Elizabeth, was guilty of the half start at sight of the persons who were approaching.

"My nephew, you should know, is intended for a working soldier," said Lady Camper; "I like that sort of soldier best."

General Ople drooped his shoulders at the personal compliment.

She resumed. "His pay is a matter of importance to him. You are aware of the smallness of a subaltern's pay."

"I," said the general, "I say I feel my poor half-pay, having always been a working soldier myself, very important, I was saying, very important to me."

"Why did you retire?"

Her interest in him seemed promising. He replied conscientiously: "Beyond the duties of general of brigade, I could not, I say I could not, dare to aspire; I can accept and execute orders; I shrink from responsibility."

"It is a pity," said she, "that you were

not, like my nephew Reginald, entirely dependent on your profession."

She laid such stress on her remark that the general, who had just expressed a very modest estimate of his abilities, was unable to reject the flattery of her assuming him to be a man of some fortune. He coughed and said, "Very little." The thought came to him that he might have to make a statement to her in time, and he emphasized: "Very little indeed. Sufficient," he assured her, "for a gentlemanly appearance."

"I have given you your warning," was her inscrutable rejoinder, uttered within earshot of the young people, to whom, especially to Elizabeth, she was gracious. The damsel's boating uniform was praised, and her sunny flush of exercise and exposure.

Lady Camper regretted that she could not abandon her parasol.

"I freckle so easily."

The general, puzzling over her strange words about a warning, gazed at the red rose

of art on her cheek with an air of profound abstraction.

"I freckle so easily," she repeated, dropping her parasol to defend her face from the calculating scrutiny.

"I burn brown," said Elizabeth.

Lady Camper laid the bud of a Falcot rose against the young girl's cheek, but fetched streams of color that overwhelmed the momentary comparison of the sun-swathed skin with the rich dusky yellow of the rose in its deepening inward to soft brown.

Reginald stretched his hand for the privileged flower, and she let him take it; then she looked at the general; but the general was looking, with his usual air of satisfaction, nowhere.

CHAPTER III.

"LADY CAMPER is no common enigma," General Ople observed to his daughter.

Elizabeth inclined to be pleased with her,

for at her suggestion the general had bought a couple of horses, that she might ride in the park accompanied by her father or the little groom. Still, the great lady was hard to read.

She tested the resources of his income by all sorts of instigation to expenditure, which his gallantry could not withstand; she encouraged him to talk of his deeds in arms; she was friendly, almost affectionate, and most bountiful in the presents of fruit, peaches, nectarines, grapes, and hot-house wonders, that she showered on his table; but she was an enigma in her evident dissatisfaction with him for something he seemed to have left unsaid. And what could that be?

At their last interview she had asked him: "Are you sure, general, you have nothing more to tell me?"

And as he remarked, when relating it to Elizabeth: "One might really be tempted to misapprehend her ladyship's— I say one might commit one's self beyond recovery.

Now, my dear, what do you think she intended?"

Elizabeth was "burning brown," or darkly blushing, as her manner was.

She answered: "I am certain you know of nothing that would interest her; nothing, unless—"

"Well?" the general urged her.

"How can I speak it, papa?"

"You really can't mean—"

"Papa, what could I mean?"

"If I were fool enough!" he murmured. "No, no, I am an old man. I was saying, I am past the age of folly."

One day Elizabeth came home from her ride in a thoughtful mood. She had not, further than has been mentioned, incited her father to think of the age of folly; but voluntarily or not, Lady Camper had, by an excess of graciousness amounting to downright invitation; as thus: "Will you persist in withholding your confidence from me, general?" She added: "I am not so difficult a person."

These prompting speeches occurred on the morning of the day when Elizabeth sat at his table, after a long ride into the country, profoundly meditative.

A note was handed to General Ople, with the request that he would step in to speak with Lady Camper in the course of the evening or next morning. Elizabeth waited till his hat was on, then said: "Papa, on my ride to-day, I met Mr. Rolles."

"I am glad you had an agreeable escort, my dear."

"I could not refuse his company."

"Certainly not. And where did you ride?"

"To a beautiful valley; and there we met—"

"Her ladyship?"

"Yes."

"She always admires you on horseback."

"So you know it, papa, if she should speak of it."

"And I am bound to tell you, my child," said the general, "that this morning Lady

Camper's manner to me was—if I were a fool —I say, this morning—I beat a retreat, but apparently she—I see no way out of it—supposing she—"

"I am sure she esteems you, dear papa," said Elizabeth.

"You take to her, my dear?" the general inquired, anxiously, "a little? A little afraid of her?"

"A little," Elizabeth replied, "only a little."

"Don't be agitated about me."

"No, papa; you are sure to do right."

"But you are trembling."

"Oh, no! I wish you success."

General Ople was overjoyed to be re-enforced by his daughter's good wishes. He kissed her to thank her. He turned back to her to kiss her again. She had greatly lightened the difficulty at least of a delicate position.

It was just like the imperious nature of Lady Camper to summon him in the evening to terminate the conversation of the morning,

from the visible pitfall of which he had beaten a rather precipitate retreat. But if his daughter cordially wished him success, and Lady Camper offered him the crown of it, why then he had only to pluck up spirit, like a good commander who has to pass a fordable river in the enemy's presence; a dash, a splash, a rattling volley or two, and you are over, established on the opposite bank. But you must be positive of victory, otherwise, with the river behind you, your new position is likely to be ticklish. So the general entered Lady Camper's drawing-room warily, watching the fair enemy. He knew he was captivating, his old conquests whispered in his ears, and her reception of him all but pointed to a footstool at her feet. He might have fallen there at once, had he not remembered a hint that Mr. Reginald Rolles had dropped concerning Lady Camper's amazing variability.

Lady Camper began:

"General, you ran away from me this morning. Let me speak. And, by the way,

I must reproach you; you should not have left it to me. Things have now gone so far that I can not pretend to be blind. I know your feelings as a father. Your daughter's happiness—"

"My lady," the general interposed, "I have her distinct assurance that it is, I say it is wrapped up in mine."

"Let me speak. Young people will say anything. Well, they have a certain excuse for selfishness; we have not. I am in some degree bound to my nephew; he is my sister's son."

"Assuredly, my lady. I would not stand in his light, be quite assured. If I am, I was saying if I am not mistaken, I— And he is, or has the making of an excellent soldier in him, and is likely to be a distinguished cavalry officer."

"He has to carve his own way in the world, general."

"All good soldiers have, my lady. And if

my position is not, after a considerable term of service, I say if—"

"To continue," said Lady Camper, "I never have liked early marriages. I was married in my teens before I knew men. Now I do know them, and now—"

The general plunged forward. "The honor you do us now—a mature experience is worth —my dear Lady Camper, I have admired you; and your objection to early marriages can not apply to—indeed, madame, vigor, they say—though youth, of course—yet young people, as you observe—and I have, though perhaps my reputation is against it, I was saying I have a natural timidity with your sex, and I am gray-headed, white-headed, but happily without a single malady."

Lady Camper's brows showed a trifling bewilderment. "I am speaking of these young people, General Ople."

"I consent to everything beforehand, my dear lady. He should be, I say Mr. Rolles should be provided for."

"So should she, general, so should Elizabeth."

"She shall be, she will, dear madame. What I have, with your permission, if—good Heaven! Lady Camper, I scarcely know where I am. She would—I shall not like to lose her; you would not wish it. In time she will—she has every quality of a good wife."

"There, stay there, and be intelligible," said Lady Camper. "She has every quality. Money should be one of them. Has she money?"

"Oh! my lady," the general exclaimed, "we shall not come upon your purse when her time comes."

"Has she ten thousand pounds?"

"Elizabeth? She will have, at her father's death—but as for my income, it is moderate, and only sufficient to maintain a gentlemanly appearance in proper self-respect. I make no show. I say I make no show. A wealthy marriage is the last thing on earth I should have aimed at. I prefer quiet and retirement.

Personally, I mean. That is my personal taste. But if the lady: I say if it should happen that the lady—and indeed I am not one to press a suit; but if she who distinguishes and honors me should chance to be wealthy, all I can do is to leave her wealth at her disposal, and that I do: I do that unreservedly. I feel I am very confused, alarmingly confused. Your ladyship merits a superior—I trust I have not—I am entirely at your ladyship's mercy."

"Are you prepared, if your daughter is asked in marriage, to settle ten thousand pounds on her, General Ople?"

The general collected himself. In his heart he thoroughly appreciated the moral beauty of Lady Camper's extreme solicitude on behalf of his daughter's provision; but he would have desired a postponement of that and other material questions belonging to a distant future until his own fate was decided.

So he said: "Your ladyship's generosity is very marked. I say it is very marked."

"Now, my good General Ople! how is it marked in any degree?" cried Lady Camper. "I am not generous. I don't pretend to be; and certainly I don't want the young people to think me so. I want to be just. I have assumed that you intend to be the same. Then will you do me the favor to reply to me?"

The general smiled winningly and intently, to show her that he prized her, and would not let her escape his eulogies.

"Marked, in this way, dear madame, that you think of my daughter's future more than I. I say more than her father himself does. I know I ought to speak more warmly, I feel warmly. I was never an eloquent man, and if you take me as a soldier, I am, as I have ever been in the service—I was saying I am Wilson Ople, of the grade of general, to be relied on for executing orders; and, madame, you are Lady Camper, and you command me. I can not be more precise. In fact, it is the feeling of the necessity for keeping close to

the business that destroys what I would say. I am in fact lamentably incompetent to conduct my own case."

Lady Camper left her chair.

"Dear me, this is very strange, unless I am singularly in error," she said.

The general now faintly guessed that he might be in error, for his part.

But she had burned his ships, blown up his bridges; retreat could not be thought of.

He stood up, his head bent and appealing to her side-face like one pleadingly in pursuit, and very deferentially, with a courteous vehemence, he entreated first her ladyship's pardon for his presumption, and then the gift of her ladyship's hand.

As for his language, it was the tongue of General Ople. But his bearing was fine. If his clipped white silken hair spoke of age, his figure breathed manliness. He was a picture, and she loved pictures.

For his own sake, she begged him to cease.

She dreaded to hear of something "gentlemanly."

"This is a new idea to me, my dear general," she said. "You must give me time. People at our age have to think of the fitness. Of course, in a sense, we are both free to do as we like. Perhaps I may be of some aid to you. My preference is for absolute independence. And I wished to talk of a different affair. Come to me to-morrow. Do not be hurt if I decide that we had better remain as we are."

The general bowed. His efforts, and the wavering of the fair enemy's flag, had inspired him with a positive reawakening of masculine passion to gain this fortress. He said well: "I have, then, the happiness, madame, of being allowed to hope until to-morrow?"

She replied: "I would not deprive you of a moment of happiness. Bring good sense with you when you do come."

The general asked, eagerly: "I have your ladyship's permission to come early?"

"Consult your happiness," she answered; and if to his mind she seemed returning to the state of enigma, it was on the whole deliciously. She restored him his youth. He told Elizabeth that night he really must begin to think of marrying her to some worthy young fellow. "Though," said he, with an air of frank intoxication, "my opinion is, the young ones are not so lively as the old in these days, or I should have been besieged before now."

The exact substance of the interview he forebore to relate to his inquisitive daughter, with a very honorable discretion.

CHAPTER IV.

ELIZABETH came riding home to breakfast from a gallop round the park, and passing Lady Camper's gates, received the salutation of her parasol. Lady Camper talked with her through the bars. There was not a sign to tell of a change or twist in her neighborly affability. She remarked simply enough that it was her

nephew's habit to take early gallops, and possibly Elizabeth might have seen him, for his quarters were proximate; but she did not demand an answer. She had passed a rather restless night, she said. "How is the general?"

"Papa must have slept soundly, for he usually calls to me through his door when he hears I am up," said Elizabeth.

Lady Camper nodded kindly and walked on.

At seven in the morning General Ople was ready for battle. His forces were, the anticipation of victory, a carefully arranged toilet, and an unaccustomed spirit of enterprise in the realms of speech; for he was no longer in such awe of Lady Camper.

"You have slept well?" she inquired.

"Excellently, my lady."

"Yes, your daughter tells me she heard you, as she went by your door in the morning for a ride to meet my nephew. You are, I shall assume, prepared for business?"

"Elizabeth—to meet—!" General Ople's impression of anything extraneous to his emotion was feeble and passed instantly. "Prepared! Oh, certainly!" and he struck in a compliment on her ladyship's fresh morning bloom.

"It can hardly be visible," she responded. "I have not painted yet."

"Does your ladyship proceed to your painting in the very early morning?"

"Rouge. I rouge."

"Dear me! I should not have supposed it."

"You have speculated on it very openly, general. I remember your trying to see a freckle through the rouge; but the truth is, I am of a supernatural paleness if I do not rouge, so I do. You understand, therefore, I have a false complexion. Now to business."

"If your ladyship insists on calling it business. I have little to offer—myself!"

"You have a gentlemanly residence."

"It is, my lady, it is. It is a *bijou.*"

"Ah!" Lady Camper sighed dejectedly.

"It is a perfect *bijou!*"

"Oblige me, general, by not pronouncing the French word as if you were swearing by something in English, like a trooper."

General Ople started, admitted that the word was French, and apologized for his pronunciation. Her variability was now visible over a corner of the battlefield like a thundercloud.

"The business we have to discuss concerns the young people, general."

"Yes," brightened by this, he assented. "Yes, dear Lady Camper, it is a part of the business; it is a secondary part; it has to be discussed; I say I subscribe beforehand. I may say that honoring, esteeming you as I do, and hoping ardently for your consent—"

"They must have a home and an income, general."

"I presume, dearest, Lady Elizabeth will be welcome in your home. I certainly shall never chase Reginald out of mine."

Lady Camper threw back her head. "Then you are not yet awake, or you practice the art of sleeping with open eyes! Now listen to me. I rouge, I have told you. I like colors, and I do not like to see wrinkles or have them seen. Therefore I rouge. I do not expect to deceive the world so flagrantly as to my age, and you I would not deceive for a moment. I am seventy."

The effect of this noble frankness on the general was to raise him from his chair in a sitting posture as if he had been blown up.

Her countenance was inexorably imperturbable under his alternate blinking and gazing that drew her close and shot her distant, like a mysterious toy.

"But," said she, "I am an artist; I dislike the look of extreme age, so I conceal it as well as I can. You are very kind to fall in with the deception; an innocent, and, I think, a proper one, before the world, though not to the gentleman who does me the honor to propose to me for my hand. You desire to settle

our business first. You esteem me; I suppose you mean as much as young people mean when they say they love. Do you? Let us come to an understanding."

"I can," the melancholy general gasped, "I say I can—I can not—I can not credit your ladyship's—"

"You are at liberty to call me Angela."

"Ange—" he tried it, and in shame relapsed. "Madame. Yes. Thanks."

"Ah," cried Lady Camper, "do not use these vulgar contractions of decent speech in my presence. I abhor the word 'thanks.' It is fit for fribbles."

"Dear me, I have used it all my life," groaned the general.

"Then for the remainder, be it understood that you renounce it. To continue, my age is—"

"Oh, impossible, impossible," the general almost wailed; there was really a crack in his voice.

"Advancing to seventy. But, like you, I

am happy to say I have not a malady. I bring no invalid frame to a union that necessitates the leaving of the front door open day and night to the doctor. My belief is, I could follow my husband still on a campaign, if he were a warrior instead of a pensioner."

General Ople winced.

He was about to say humbly, "As general of brigade—"

"Yes, yes, you want a commanding officer, and that I have seen, and that has caused me to meditate on your proposal," she interrupted him; while he, studying her countenance hard, with the painful aspect of a youth who lashes a donkey memory in an examination by word of mouth, attempted to marshal her signs of younger years against her awful confession of the extremely ancient, the witheringly ancient. But for the manifest rouge, manifest in spite of her declaration that she had not yet that morning proceeded to her paint-brush, he would have thrown down his glove to challenge her on the subject of her

age. She actually had charms. Her mouth had a charm; her eyes were lively; her figure, mature if you like, was at least full and good; she stood upright, she had a queenly seat. His mental ejaculation was: "What a wonderful constitution!"

By a lapse of politeness he repeated it to himself half aloud; he was shockingly nervous.

"Yes, I have finer health than many a younger woman," she said. "An ordinary calculation would give me twenty good years to come. I am a widow, as you know. And, by the way, you have a leaning for widows. Have you not? I thought I had heard of a Widow Barcop in this parish. Do not protest. I assure you I am a stranger to jealousy. My income—"

The general raised his hands.

"Well, then," said the cool and self-contained lady, "before I go further, I may ask you, knowing what you have forced me to confess, are you still of the same mind as to marriage? And one moment, general. I promise

you most sincerely that your withdrawing a step shall not, as far as it touches me, affect my neighborly and friendly sentiments, not in any degree. Shall we be as we were?"

Lady Camper extended her delicate hand to him.

He took it respectfully, inspected the aristocratic and unshrunken fingers, and kissing them, said: "I never withdraw from a position unless I am beaten back. Lady Camper, I—"

"My name is Angela."

The general tried again; he could not utter the name.

To call a lady of seventy Angela is difficult in itself. It is, it seems, thrice difficult in the way of courtship.

"Angela!" said she.

"Yes. I say, there is not a more beautiful female name, dear Lady Camper."

"Spare me that word 'female' as long as you live. Address me by that name, if you please."

The general smiled. The smile was meant for propitiation and sweetness. It became a brazen smile.

"Unless you wish to step back," said she.

"Indeed, no. I am happy, Lady Camper. My life is yours. I say my life is devoted to you, dear madame."

"Angela!"

General Ople was blushingly delivered of the name.

"That will do," said she. "And as I think it possible one may be admired too much as an artist, I must request you to keep my number of years a secret."

"To the death, madame!" said the general.

"And now we will take a turn in the garden, Wilson Ople. And beware of one thing, for a commencement, for you are full of weeds, and I mean to pluck out a few: never call any place a gentlemanly residence in my hearing, nor let it come to my ears that you have been using the phrase elsewhere. Don't express astonishment. At present it is enough

that I dislike it. But this only," Lady Camper added, " this only if it is not your intention to withdraw from your position."

" Madame, my lady, I was saying—hem!—Angela, I could not wish to withdraw!"

Lady Camper leaned with some pressure on his arm, observing: " You have a curious attachment to antiquities."

" My dear lady, it is your mind; I say it is your mind; I was saying I am in love with your mind," the general endeavored to assure her, and himself too.

" Or is it my powers as an artist?"

" Your mind, your extraordinary powers of mind."

" Well," said Lady Camper, " a veteran general of brigade is as good a crutch as a childless old grannam can have."

And such, as a crutch, General Ople, parading her grounds with the aged woman, found himself used and treated.

The accuracy of his perceptions might be questioned. He was like a man stunned by

some great tropical fruit, which responds to the longing of his eyes by falling on his head; but it appeared to him that she increased in bitterness at every step they took, as if determined to make him realize her wrinkles.

He was even so inconsequent, or so little recognized his position as to object in his heart to hear himself called Wilson.

It is true that she uttered Wilson Ople as if the names formed one word. And on a second occasion (when he inclined to feel hurt) she remarked, "I fear, Wilsonople, if we are to speak plainly, thou art but a fool."

He, perhaps, naturally objected to that. He was, however, giddy, and barely knew.

Yet once more the magical woman changed. All semblance of harshness and harridan-like spike-tonguedness vanished when she said adieu.

The astronomer, looking at the crusty jag and scoria of the magnified moon through his telescope, and again with naked eyes at the soft-beaming moon, when the crater-ridges are

faint as eyebrow pencilings, has a similar sharp alternation of prospect to that which mystified General Ople.

But between watching an orb that is only variable at our caprice, and contemplating a woman who shifts and quivers ever at her own, how vast the difference!

And consider that this woman is about to be one's wife!

He could have believed (if he had not known full surely that such things are not) he was in the hands of a witch.

Lady Camper's "adieu" was perfectly beautiful—a kind, cordial, intimate, above all, to satisfy his present craving, it was a lady-like adieu—the adieu of a delicate and elegant woman, who had hardly left her anchorage by forty to sail into the fifties.

Alas! he had her word for it that she was not less than seventy. And worse, she had betrayed most melancholy signs of sourness and agedness as soon as he had sworn himself to her fast and fixed.

"The road is open to you to retreat," were her last words.

"My road," he answered, gallantly, "is forward."

He was drawing backward as he said it, and something provoked her to smile.

CHAPTER V.

It is a noble thing to say that your road is forward, and it befits a man of battles. General Ople was too loyal a gentleman to think of any other road. Still, albeit not gifted with imagination, he could not avoid the feeling that he had set his face to winter. He found himself suddenly walking straight into the heart of winter, and a nipping winter. For her ladyship had proved acutely nipping. His little customary phrases, to which Lady Camper objected, he could see no harm in whatever. Conversing with her in the privacy of domestic life would never be the flowing business that it is for other men. It would de-

mand perpetual vigilance, hop, skip, jump, floundering, and apologies.

This was not a pleasing prospect.

On the other hand, she was the niece of an earl. She was wealthy. She might be an excellent friend to Elizabeth; and she could be, when she liked, both commandingly and bewitchingly lady-like.

Good! But he was a general officer of not more than fifty-five, in his full vigor, and she a woman of seventy!

The prospect was bleak. It resembled an outlook on the steppes. In point of the discipline he was to expect, he might be compared to a raw recruit, and in his own home!

However, she was a woman of mind. One would be proud of her.

But did he know the worst of her? A dreadful presentiment that he did not know the worst of her rolled an ocean of gloom upon General Ople, striking out one solitary thought in the obscurity—namely, that he was about to receive punishment for retiring from active

service to a life of ease at a comparatively early age, when still in marching trim. And the shadow of the thought was that he deserved the punishment!

He was in his garden with the dawn. Hard exercise is the best of opiates for dismal reflections. The general discomposed his daughter by offering to accompany her on her morning ride before breakfast. She considered that it would fatigue him. "I am not a man of eighty!" he cried. He could have wished that he had been.

He led the way to the park, where they soon had sight of young Rolles, who checked his horse and spied them like a vedette, but, perceiving that he had been seen, came cantering and hailing the general with hearty wonderment.

"And what's this the world says, general?" said he. "But we all applaud your taste. My aunt Angela was the handsomest woman of her time."

The general murmured in confusion: "Dear

me!" and looked at the young man, thinking that he could not have known the time.

"Is all arranged, my dear general?"

"Nothing is arranged; and I beg—I say I beg—I came out for fresh air and pace."

The general rode frantically.

In spite of the fresh air he was unable to eat at breakfast. He was bound, of course, to present himself to Lady Camper, in common civility, immediately after it.

And first, what were the phrases he had to avoid uttering in her presence? He could remember only the "gentlemanly residence." And it was a gentlemanly residence, he thought, as he took leave of it. It was one, neatly named to fit the place. Lady Camper is indeed a most eccentric person! he decided from his experience of her.

He was rather astonished that young Rolles should have spoken so coolly of his aunt's leaning to matrimony; but perhaps her exact age was unknown to the younger members of her family.

This idea refreshed him by suggesting the extremely honorable nature of Lady Camper's uncomfortable confession.

He himself had an uncomfortable confession to make. He would have to speak of his income. He was living up to the edges of it.

"She is an upright woman, and I must be the same!" he said, fortunately not in her hearing.

The subject was disagreeable to a man sensitive on the topic of money, and feeling that his prudence had recently been misled to keep up appearances.

Lady Camper was in her garden, reclining under her parasol. A chair was beside her, to which, acknowledging the salutation of her suitor, she waved him.

"You have met my nephew Reginald this morning, general?"

"Curiously, in the park, this morning, before breakfast, I did—yes. Hem! I—I say I did meet him. Has your ladyship seen him?"

"No. The park is very pretty in the early morning."

"Sweetly pretty."

Lady Camper raised her head, and with the mildness of assured dictatorship, pronounced:

"Never say that before me."

"I submit, my lady," said the poor scourged man.

"Why, naturally you do. Vulgar phrases have to be endured, except when our intimates are guilty, and then we are not merely offended—we are compromised by them. You are still of the mind in which you left me yesterday? You are one day older. But, I warn you, so am I."

"Yes, my lady, we can not—I say we can not check — time. Decidedly of the same mind. Quite so."

"Oblige me by never saying 'Quite so.' My lawyer says it. It reeks of the city of London. And do not look so miserable."

"I, madame?—my dear lady!" the general flashed out in a radiance that dulled instantly.

"Well," said she, cheerfully, "and you're for the old woman?"

"For Lady Camper."

"You are seductive in your flatteries, general. Well, then, we have to speak of business."

"My affairs—"

General Ople was beginning, with perturbed forehead, but Lady Camper held up her finger.

"We will touch on your affairs incidentally. Now, listen to me, and do not exclaim until I have finished. You know that these two young ones have been whispering over the wall for some months. They have been meeting on the river and in the park habitually, apparently with your consent."

"My lady!"

"I did not say with your connivance."

"You mean my daughter Elizabeth?"

"And my nephew Reginald. We have named them, if that advances us. Now, the end of such meetings is marriage, and the

sooner the better, if they are to continue. I would rather they should not; I do not hold it good for young soldiers to marry. But if they do, it is very certain that their pay will not support a family; and in a marriage of two healthy young people, we have to assume the existence of the family. You have allowed matters to go so far that the boy is hot in love; I suppose the girl is, too. She is a nice girl. I do not object to her personally. But I insist that a settlement be made on her before I give my nephew one penny. Hear me out, for I am not fond of business, and shall be glad to have done with these explanations. Reginald has nothing of his own. He is my sister's son, and I loved her, and rather like the boy. He has at present four hundred a year from me. I will double it, on the condition that you at once make over ten thousand pounds—not less; and let it be yes or no—to be settled on your daughter and go to her children, independent of the husband—*cela va sans dire.* Now you may speak, general."

The general spoke, with breath fetched from the deeps:

"Ten thousand pounds! Hem! Ten! frankly, ten, my lady! One's income—I am quite taken by surprise. I say Elizabeth's conduct —though, poor child, it is natural to her to seek a mate—I mean, to accept a mate and an establishment; and Reginald is a very hopeful fellow—I was saying they jump on me out of an ambush, and I wish them every happiness. And she is an ardent soldier, and a soldier she must marry. But ten thousand!"

"It is to secure the happiness of your daughter, general."

"Pounds! my lady. It would rather cripple me."

"You would have my house, general; you would have the moiety, as the lawyers say, of my purse; you would have horses, carriages, servants; I do not divine what more you would wish to have."

"But, madame—a pensioner on the government! I can look back on past services—I

say old services—and I accept my position. But, madame, a pensioner on my wife, bringing next to nothing to the common estate! I fear my self-respect would, I say would—"

"Well, and what would it do, General Ople?"

"I was saying my self-respect as my wife's pensioner, my lady. I could not come to her empty-handed."

"Do you expect that I should be the person to settle money on your daughter, to save her from mischances? A rakish husband, for example, for Reginald is young, and no one can guess what will be made of him."

"Undoubtedly your ladyship is correct. We might try absence for the poor girl. I have no female relation, but I could send her to the sea-side to a lady friend."

"General Ople, I forbid you, as you value my esteem, ever—and I repeat, I forbid you ever—to afflict my ears with that phrase 'lady friend!'"

The general blinked in a state of insurgent humility.

These incessant whippings could not but sting the humblest of men; and "lady friend," he was sure, was a very common term, used, he was sure, in the very best society. He had never heard her majesty speak at levees of a lady friend, but he was quite sure that she had one; and if so, what could be the objection to her subjects mentioning it as a term to suit their own circumstances?

He was harassed and perplexed by old Lady Camper's treatment of him, and he resolved not to call her Angela, even upon supplication —not that day, at least.

She said: "You will not need to bring property of any kind to the common estate; I neither look for it nor desire it. The generous thing for you to do would be to give your daughter all you have, and come to me."

"But, Lady Camper, if I denude myself or curtail my income—a man at his wife's discretion, I was saying a man at his wife's mercy—"

General Ople was really forced, by his manly dignity, to make this protest on its behalf. He did not see how he could have escaped doing so; he was more an agent than a principal. "My wife's mercy," he said again, but simply as a herald proclaiming superior orders.

Lady Camper's brows were wrathful. A deep blood-crimson overcame the rouge, and gave her a terrible stormy look.

"The congress now ceases to sit, and the treaty is not concluded," was all she said.

She rose, bowed to him, "Good-morning, general," and turned her back.

He sighed. He was a free man. But this could not be denied—whatever the lady's age, she was a grand woman in her carriage, and when looking angry she had a queen-like aspect that raised her out of the reckoning of time.

So now he knew there was a worse behind what he had previously known. He was precipitate in calling it the worst.

"Now," said he to himself, "I know the worst!"

No man should ever say it. Least of all, one who has entered into relations with an eccentric lady.

CHAPTER VI.

POLITENESS required that General Ople should not appear to rejoice in his dismissal as a suitor, and should at least make some show of holding himself at the beck of a reconsidering mind. He was guilty of running up to London early next day, and remaining absent until nightfall; and he did the same on the two following days. When he presented himself at Lady Camper's lodge gates, the astonishing intelligence that her ladyship had departed for the Continent and Egypt gave him qualms of remorse, which assumed a more definite shape in something like awe of her triumphant constitution. He forbore to mention her age, for he was the most honorable of men, but a habit of tea-table talkativeness impelled him to say and repeat an idea that had

visited him, to the effect that Lady Camper was one of those wonderful women who are comparable to brilliant generals, and defend themselves from the siege of Time by various aggressive movements. Fearful of not being understood, owing to the rarity of the occasions when the squat, plain squad of honest Saxon regulars at his command were called upon to explain an idea, he recast the sentence. But, as it happened that the regulars of his vocabulary were not numerous, and not accustomed to work upon thoughts and images, his repetitions rather succeeded in exposing the piece of knowledge he had recently acquired than in making his meaning plainer. So we need not marvel that his acquaintances should suppose him to be secretly aware of an extreme degree in which Lady Camper was a veteran.

General Ople entered into the gayeties of the neighborhood once more, and passed through the winter cheerfully. In justice to him, however, it should be said that to the in-

tent dwelling of his mind upon Lady Camper, and not to the festive life he led, was due his entire ignorance of his daughter's unhappiness. She lived with him, and yet it was in other houses he learned that she was unhappy. After his last interview with Lady Camper, he had informed Elizabeth of the ruinous and preposterous amount of money demanded of him for a settlement upon her; and Elizabeth, like the girl of good sense that she was, had replied immediately, "It could not be thought of, papa."

He had spoken to Reginald likewise. The young man fell into a dramatic tearing-of-hair and long-stride fury not ill-becoming an enamored dragoon. But he maintained that his aunt, though an eccentric, was a cordially kind woman. He seemed to feel, if he did not partly hint, that the general might have accepted Lady Camper's terms. The young officer could not longer be welcome at Douro Lodge, so the general paid him a morning call at his quarters, and was distressed to find him

breakfasting very late, tapping eggs that he forgot to open—one of the surest signs of a young man downright and deeply in love, as the general knew from experience—and surrounded by uncut sporting journals of past weeks, which dated from the day when his blow had struck him, as accurately as the watch of the drowned man marks his minute.

Lady Camper had gone to Italy, and was in communication with her nephew. Reginald was not further explicit. His legs were very prominent in his despair, and his fingers frequently performed the part of blunt combs, consequently the general was impressed by his passion for Elizabeth. The girl who, if she was often meditative, always met his eyes with a smile, and quietly said: "Yes, papa," and "No, papa," gave him little concern as to the state of her feelings. Yet everybody said now that she was unhappy.

Mrs. Barcop, the widow, raised her voice above the rest. So attentive was she to Elizabeth that the general had it kindly suggested to

him that some one was courting him through his daughter. He gazed at the widow.

Now she was not much past thirty; and it was really singular—he could have laughed—the thinking of Mrs. Barcop set him persistently thinking of Lady Camper. That is to say, his mad fancy reverted from the lady of perhaps thirty-five to the lady of seventy. Such, thought he, is genius in a woman. Of his neighbors generally, Mrs. Baerens, the wife of a German merchant, an exquisite player on the pianoforte, was the most inclined to lead him to speak of Lady Camper. She was a kind, prattling woman, and was known to have been a governess before her charms withdrew the gastronomic Gottfried Baerens from his devotion to the well-served City club, where, as he exclaimed (ever turning fondly to his wife as he vocalized the compliment), he had found every necessity, every luxury in life, "as you can not have dem out of London —all save de female!" Mrs. Baerens, a lady of Teutonic extraction, was distinguishable as

one of that sex; at least she was not masculine. She spoke with great respect of Lady Camper and her family, and seemed to agree in the general's eulogies of Lady Camper's constitution. Still he thought she eyed him strangely.

One April morning the general received a letter with the Italian postmark. Opening it with his usual calm and happy curiosity, he perceived that it was composed of pen-and-ink drawings. And suddenly his heart sunk like a scuttled ship. He saw himself the victim of a caricature.

The first sketch had merely seemed picturesque, and he supposed it a clever play of fancy by some traveling friend, or perhaps an actual scene slightly exaggerated.

Even on reading "A distant View of the City of Wilsonople," he was only slightly enlightened. His heart beat still with befitting regularity. But the second and the third sketches betrayed the terrible hand. The distant view of the city of Wilsonople was fair with glittering domes, which, in the succeed-

ing near view, proved to have been soap-bubbles, for a place of extreme flatness, begrit with crazy old-fashioned fortifications, was shown; and in the third view, representing the interior, stood for sole place of habitation, a sentry-box.

Most minutely drawn, and, alas, with fearful accuracy, a military gentleman in undress occupied the box. Not a doubt could exist as to the person it was meant to be.

The general tried hard to remain incredulous. He remembered too well who had called him Wilsonople.

But here was the extraordinary thing that sent him over the neighborhood canvassing for exclamations: on the fourth page was the outline of a lovely feminine hand holding a pen, as in the act of shading, and under it was written these words: "What I say is, I say I think it exceedingly unlady-like."

Now consider the general's feelings when, turning to this fourth page, having these very words in his mouth, as the accurate expres-

sion of his thoughts, he discovered them written.

An enemy who anticipates the actions of our mind has a quality of the malignant divine that may well inspire terror. The senses of General Ople were struck by the aspect of a black goddess who penetrated him, read him through, and had both power and will to expose and make him ridiculous forever.

The loveliness of the hand, too, in a perplexing manner contested his denunciation of her conduct. It was lady-like eminently, and it involved him in a confused mixture of the moral and material, as great as young people are known to feel when they make the attempt to separate them, in one of their frenzies.

With a petty, bitter laugh he folded the letter, put it in his breast-pocket, and sallied forth for a walk, chiefly to talk to himself about it. But as it absorbed him entirely, he showed it to the rector, whom he met, and what the rector said is of no consequence, for General Ople listened to no remarks, calling

in succession on the Pollingtons, the Goslings, the Baerens, and others, early though it was, and the lords of those houses absent amassing hoards; and to the ladies everywhere he displayed the sketches he had received, observing that Wilsonople meant himself; and there he was, he said, pointing at the capped fellow in the sentry box, done unmistakably. The likeness indeed was remarkable. "She is a woman of genius," he ejaculated, with utter melancholy.

Mrs. Baerens, by the aid of a magnifying-glass, assisted him to read a line under the sentry box, that he had taken for a mere trembling dash; it ran: "A gentlemanly residence."

"What eyes she has!" the general exclaimed. "I say it is miraculous what eyes she has at her time of— I was saying I should never have known it was writing."

He sighed heavily. His shuddering sensitiveness to caricature was increased by a certain evident dread of the hand which struck;

the knowing that he was absolutely bare to this woman, defenseless, open to exposure in his little whims, foibles, tricks, incompetencies, in what lay in his heart, and the words that would come to his tongue. He felt like a man haunted.

So deeply did he feel the blow that people asked how it was that he could be so foolish as to dance about assisting Lady Camper in her efforts to make him ridiculous; he acted the parts of publisher and agent for the fearful caricaturist. In truth there was a strangely double reason for his conduct, he danced about for sympathy, he had the intensest craving for sympathy, but more than this, or quite as much, he desired to have the powers of his enemy widely appreciated; in the first place, that he might be excused to himself for wincing under them, and secondly, because an awful admiration of her that should be deepened by a corresponding sentiment around him, helped him to enjoy luxurious recollections of an hour when he was near making her

his own—his own, in the holy abstract contemplation of marriage, without realizing their probable relative conditions after the ceremony.

"I say that is the very image of her ladyship's hand," he was especially fond of remarking, "I say it is a beautiful hand."

He carried the letter in his pocket-book; and beginning to fancy that she had done her worst, for he could not imagine an inventive malignity capable of pursuing the theme, he spoke of her treatment of him with compassionate regret, not badly assumed from being partly sincere.

Two letters dated in France, the one Dijon, the other Fontainebleau, arrived together; and as the general knew Lady Camper to be returning to England, he expected that she was anxious to excuse herself to him. His fingers were not so confident, for he tore one of the letters to open it.

The city of Wilsonople was recognizable immediately. So likewise was the sole inhabitant.

General Ople's petty, bitter laugh returned, like a weak-chested patient's cough in the shifting of our winds eastward.

A faceless woman's shadow kneels on the ground near the sentry box, weeping. A faceless shadow of a young man on horseback is beheld galloping toward a gulf. The sole inhabitant contemplates his largely substantial full-fleshed face and figure in a glass.

Next, we see the standard of Great Britain furled; next, unfurled and borne by a troop of shadows to the sentry-box. The officer within says: "I say I should be very happy to carry it, but I can not quit this gentlemanly residence."

Next, the standard is shown assailed by popguns. Several of the shadows are prostrate. "I was saying, I assure you that nothing but this gentlemanly residence prevents me from heading you," says the gallant officer.

General Ople trembled with protestant indignation when he saw himself reclining in a magnified sentry box, while the detachments

of shadows hurry to him to show him the standard of his country trailing in the dust; and he is maliciously made to say: "I dislike responsibility. I say I am a fervent patriot, and very fond of my comforts, but I shun responsibility."

The second letter contained scenes between Wilsonople and the Moon.

He addresses her as his neighbor, and tells her of his triumphs over the sex.

He requests her to inform him whether she is a "female," that she may be triumphed over.

He hastens past her window on foot, with his head bent, just as the general had been in the habit of walking.

He drives a mouse-pony furiously by.

He cuts down a tree that she may peep through.

Then, from the Moon's point of view, Wilsonople, a Silenus, is discerned in an armchair winking at a couple too plainly pouting their lips for a doubt of their intentions to be entertained.

A fourth letter arrived, bearing date of Paris. This one illustrated Wilsonople's courtship of the Moon, and ended with his "saying," in his peculiar manner: "In spite of her paint I could not have conceived her age to be so enormous."

How break off his engagement with the Lady Moon? Consent to none of her terms!

Little used as he was to read behind a veil, acuteness of suffering sharpened the general's intelligence to a degree that sustained him in animated dialogue with each succeeding sketch or poisoned arrow whirring at him, from the moment his eyes rested on it; and here are a few samples:

"Wilsonople informs the Moon that she is 'sweetly pretty.'"

"He thanks her with 'Thanks!' for a handsome piece of lunar green cheese."

"He points to her, apparently saying to some one 'My lady friend.'"

"He sneezes '*Bijou! bijou! bijou!*'"

They were trifles, but they attacked his

habits of speech; and he began to grow more and more alarmingly absurd in each fresh caricature of his person.

He looked at himself as the malicious woman's hand had shaped him. It was unjust; it was no resemblance—and yet it was! There was a corner of likeness left that leavened the lump; henceforth he must walk abroad with this distressing image of himself before his eyes, instead of the satisfactory reflex of the man who had, and was happy in thinking that he had done mischief in his time. Such an end for a conquering man was too pathetic.

The general surprised himself talking to himself in something louder than a hum at neighbors' dinner-tables. He looked about and noticed that people were silently watching him.

CHAPTER VII.

Lady Camper's return was the subject of speculation in the neighborhood, for most

people thought she would cease to persecute the general with her preposterous and unwarrantable pen-and-ink sketches when living so closely proximate; and how he would behave was the question. Those who made a hero of him were sure he would treat her with disdain. Others were uncertain. He had been so severely hit that it seemed possible he would not show much spirit.

He, for his part, had come to entertain such dread of the post, that Lady Camper's return relieved him of his morning apprehensions; and he would have forgiven her, though he feared to see her, if only she had promised to leave him in peace for the future. He feared to see her, because of the too probable furnishing of fresh matter for her ladyship's hand. Of course he could not avoid being seen by her, and that was a particular misery. A gentlemanly humility or demureness of aspect when seen, would, he hoped, disarm his enemy. It should, he thought. He had borne unheard-of things. No one of his

friends and acquaintances knew, they could not know, what he had endured. It had caused him fits of stammering. It had destroyed the composure of his gait. Elizabeth had informed him that he talked to himself incessantly, and aloud. She, poor child, looked pale, too. She was evidently anxious about him.

Young Rolles, whom he had met now and then, persisted in praising his aunt's good heart. So, perhaps, having satiated her revenge, she might now be inclined for peace, on the terms of distant civility.

"Yes. Poor Elizabeth!" sighed the general, in pity of the poor girl's disappointment; "poor Elizabeth! she little guesses what her father has gone through. Poor child! I say, she hasn't any idea of my sufferings." He commended himself for keeping them from her.

General Ople delivered his card at Lady Camper's lodge gates, and escaped to his residence in a state of prickly heat that required

the brushing of his hair with hard brushes for ten minutes to comfort and re-establish him.

He fell to working in his garden, when Lady Camper's card was brought to him an hour after the delivery of his own, a pleasing promptitude, showing signs of repentance, and suggesting to the general instantly some sharp sarcasms upon women, which he had come upon in quotation in the papers and the pulpit, his two main sources of information.

Instead of handing back the card to the maid, he stuck it in his hat and went on digging.

The first of a series of letters containing shameless realistic caricatures was handed to him the afternoon following. They came fast and thick. Not a day's interval of grace was allowed. Niobe under the shafts of Diana was hardly less violently and morally assailed. The deadliness of the attack lay in the ridicule of the daily habits of one of the most sensitive of men, as to his personal appearance, and the opinion of the world. He might have con-

cealed the sketches, but he could not have concealed the bruises, and people were perpetually asking the unhappy general what he was saying, for he spoke to himself as if he were repeating something to them for the tenth time.

"I say," said he, "I say, that for a lady, really an educated lady, to sit, as she must—I was saying, she must have sat in an attic to have the right view of me. And there, you see, this is what she has done. This is the last; this is the afternoon's delivery. Her ladyship has me correctly as to costume, but I could not exhibit such a sketch to ladies."

A back view of the general was displayed in his act of digging.

"I say I could not allow ladies to see it," he informed the gentlemen, who were suffered to inspect it freely.

"But you see I have no means of escape; I am at her mercy from morning to night," the general said, with a quivering tongue, "unless I stay at home inside the house; and that

is death to me, or unless I abandon the place, and my lease; and I shall—I say, I shall find nowhere in England for anything like the money or conveniences such a gent—a residence you would call fit for a gentleman. I call it a *bi*—it is, in short, a gem. But I shall have to go."

Young Rolles offered to expostulate with his aunt Angela.

The general said: "Tha—I thank you very much. I would not have her ladyship suppose I am so susceptible. I hardly know," he confessed pitiably, "what it is right to say, and what not—what not. I—I—I never know that I am not looking a fool. I hurry from tree to tree to shun the light. I am seriously affected in my appetite. I say I shall have to go."

Reginald gave him to understand that if he flew the shafts would follow him, for Lady Camper would never forgive his running away, and was quite equal to publishing a book of the adventures of Wilsonople.

Sunday afternoon, walking in the park with his daughter on his arm, General Ople met Mr. Rolles. He saw that the young man and Elizabeth were mortally pale, and as the very idea of wretchedness directed his attention to himself, he addressed them conjointly on the subject of his persecution, giving neither of them a chance of speaking until they were constrained to part.

A sketch was the consequence, in which a withered Cupid and a fading Psyche were seen divided by Wilsonople, who keeps them forcibly asunder with policeman's fists, while courteously and elegantly entreating them to hear him. "Meet," he tells them, "as often as you like, in my company, so long as you listen to me;" and the pathos of his aspect makes hungry demand for a sympathetic audience.

Now this, and not the series representing the martyrdom of the old couple at Douro Lodge gates, whose rigid frames bore witness to the close packing of a gentlemanly resi-

dence, this was the sketch General Ople, in his madness from the pursuing bite of the gadfly, handed about at Mrs. Pollington's lawn-party. Some have said that he would not have betrayed his daughter; but it is reasonable to suppose he had no idea of his daughter's being the Psyche. Or if he had, it was indistinct, owing to the violence of his personal emotion. Assuming this to have been the very sketch, he handed it to two or three ladies in turn, and was heard to deliver himself at intervals in the following snatches: "As you like, my lady, as you like; strike, I say, strike; I bear it; I say I bear it. If her ladyship is unforgiving, I say I am enduring—I may go—I was saying I may go mad, but while I have my reason I walk upright—I walk upright."

Mr. Pollington and certain City gentlemen hearing the poor general's renewed soliloquies, were seized with disgust of Lady Camper's conduct, and stoutly advised an application to the law courts.

He gave ear to them abstractedly, but after

pulling out the whole chapter of the caricatures (which it seemed that he kept in a case of morocco leather in his breast-pocket), showing them, with comments on them, and observing, "There will be more—there must be more—I say I am sure there are things I do that her ladyship will discover and expose," he declined to seek redress or simple protection; and the miserable spectacle was exhibited soon after of this courtly man listening to Mrs. Barcop on the weather, and replying in acquiescence: "It is hot— If your ladyship will only abstain from colors. Very hot, as you say, madame—I do not complain of pen and ink, but I would rather escape colors. And I dare say you find it hot, too?"

Mrs. Barcop shut her eyes and sighed over the wreck of a handsome military officer.

She asked him: "What is your objection to colors?"

His hand was at his breast-pocket immediately, as he said: "Have you not seen?"—though but a few minutes back he had shown

her the contents of the packet, including a hurried glance of the famous digging scene.

By this time the entire district was in fervid sympathy with General Ople. The ladies did not, as their lords did, proclaim astonishment that a man should suffer a woman to goad him to a state of semi-lunacy; but one or two confessed to their husbands that it required a great admiration of General Ople not to despise him, both for his susceptibility and his patience. As for the men, they knew him to have faced the balls in bellowing battle-strife; they knew him to have endured privation, not only cold, but downright want of food and drink—an almost unimaginable horror to these brave daily feasters; so they could not quite look on him in contempt; but his want of sense was offensive, and still more so his submission to a scourging by a woman. Not one of them would have deigned to feel it. Would they have allowed her to see that she could sting them? They would have laughed ather. Or they would have dragged her before a magistrate.

It was a Sunday in early summer when General Ople walked to morning service, unaccompanied by Elizabeth, who was unwell. The church was of the considerate, old-fashioned order, with square pews, permitting the mind to abstract itself from the sermon, or wrestle at leisure with the difficulties presented by the preacher, as General Ople often did, feeling not a little in love with his sincere attentiveness for grappling with the knotty point, and partially allowing the struggle to be seen. The church was, besides, a sanctuary for him. Hither his enemy did not come. He had this one place of refuge, and he almost looked a happy man again.

He had passed into his hat and out of it, which he habitually did standing, when who should walk up to within a couple of yards of him but Lady Camper. Her pew was full of poor people, who made signs of retiring. She signified to them that they were to sit, then quietly took her seat among them, fronting the general across the aisle.

During the sermon a low voice, sharp in contradistinction to the monotone of the preacher's, was heard to repeat these words: "I say I am not sure I shall survive it." Considerable muttering in the same quarter was heard besides.

After the customary ceremonious game, when all were free to move, of nobody liking to move first, Lady Camper and a charity boy were the persons who took the lead. But Lady Camper could not quit her pew, owing to the sticking of the door. She smiled, as with her pretty hand she twice or thrice essayed to shake it open. General Ople strode to her aid. He pulled the door, gave the shadow of a respectful bow, and no doubt he would have withdrawn, had not Lady Camper, while acknowledging the civility, placed her prayer-book in his hands to carry at her heels. There was no choice for him. He made a sort of slipping dance back for his hat, and followed her ladyship. All present being eager to witness the spectacle, the passage of Lady Cam-

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per dragging the victim general behind her was observed without a stir of the well-dressed members of the congregation, until a desire overcame them to see how Lady Camper would behave to her fish when she had him outside the sacred edifice.

None could have imagined such a scene. Lady Camper was in her carriage; General Ople was, hat in hand, at the carriage-step, and he looked as if he were toasting before the bars of a furnace, for while he stood there, Lady Camper was rapidly penciling outlines in a small pocket sketch-book. There are dogs whose shyness is put to it to endure human observation and a direct address to them, even on the part of their masters; and these dear simple dogs wag tail and turn their heads aside waveringly, as though to entreat you not to eye them and talk to them so. General Ople, in the presence of the sketch-book, was much like the nervous animal. He would fain have run away. He glanced at it, and round about, and again at it, and at the

heavens. Her ladyship's cruelty, and his inexplicable submission to it, were witnessed of the multitude.

The general's friends walked very slowly. Lady Camper's carriage whirled by, and the general came up with them, accosting them and himself alternately. They asked him where Elizabeth was, and he replied, "Poor child, yes! I am told she is pale, but I can not believe I am so perfectly—I say so perfectly—ridiculous when I join in the responses." He drew forth half a dozen sheets, and showed them sketches that Lady Camper had taken in church, caricaturing him in the sitting down and the standing up. She had torn them out of the book, and presented them to him when driving off. "I was saying, worship in the ordinary sense will be interdicted to me if her ladyship—" said the general, wofully, shuffling the sketch-paper sheets in which he figured.

He made the following odd confession to Mr. and Mrs. Gosling on the road—that he had gone to his chest, and taken out his sword-belt

to measure his girth, and found himself thinner than when he left the service, which had not been the case before his attendance at the last levee of the foregoing season. So the deduction was obvious—that Lady Camper had reduced him. She had reduced him as effectually as a harassing siege.

"But why do you pay attention to her! Why—" exclaimed Mr. Gosling, a gentleman of the City, whose roundness would have turned a rifle-shot.

"To allow her to wound you so seriously!" exclaimed Mrs. Gosling.

"Madame, if she were my wife," the general explained, "I should feel it. I say it is the fact of it; I feel it, if I appear so extremely ridiculous to a human eye, to any one eye."

"To Lady Camper's eye!"

He admitted it might be that. He had not thought of ascribing the acuteness of his pain to the miserable image he presented to this particular lady's eye. No; it really was

true, curiously true; another lady's eye might have transformed him to a pumpkin shape, exaggerated all his foibles fifty-fold, and he, though not liking it, of course not, would yet have preserved a certain manly equanimity. How was it Lady Camper had such power over him—a lady concealing seventy years with a rouge-box or paint-pot? It was witch-craft in its worst character. He had for six months at her bidding been actually living the life of a beast, degraded in his own esteem; scorched by every laugh he heard; running, pursued, overtaken, and, as it were, scored or branded, and then let go for the process to be repeated.

CHAPTER VIII.

Our young barbarians have it all their own way with us when they fall into love-liking; they lead us whither they please, and interest us in their wishings, their weepings, and that fine performance, their kissings. But when

we see our veterans tottering to their fall, we scarcely consent to their having a wish: as for a kiss, we halloo at them if we discover them on a by-way to the sacred grove where such things are supposed to be done by the venerable. And this piece of rank injustice, not to say impoliteness, is entirely because of an unsound opinion that Nature is not in it, as though it were our esteem for Nature which caused us to disrespect them. They, in truth, show her to us discreet, civilized, in a decent moral aspect; vistas of real life, views of the mind's eye, are opened by their touching little emotions: whereas those bully youngsters who come bellowing at us and catch us by the senses plainly prove either that we are no better than they, or that we give our attention of Nature only when she makes us afraid of her. If we cared for her, we should be up and after her reverentially in her sedater steps, deeply studying her in her slower paces. Whirling, she teaches nothing. Our closest instructors, the true philosophers—the story-tellers, in

short—will learn in time that Nature is not of necessity always roaring, and as soon as they do, the world may be said to be enlightened. Meantime, in the contemplation of a pair of white whiskers fluttering round a pair of manifestly painted cheeks, be assured that Nature is in it, very Nature, domesticated Nature, the Nature of gradations, Nature with a perspective. Art in days to come will dote on the theme. It is Nature calling to Nature, Nature amazed with brains, and pursuing the direction of their index; not that hectoring old wanton—but let the young have their fun. Let the superior interest of the passions of the aged be conceded, and not a word shall be said against the young. They are young, and happily they can not clothe themselves.

If, then, Nature is in it, with a couple properly attired, how has she been made active? The reason of her launch upon this last adventure is, that she has perceived the person who can supply the virtue known to her by experience to be wanting. Thus, in the broader

instance, many who have journeyed far down the road, turn back to the worship of youth, which they have lost. Some are for the graceful worldliness of wit, of which they have just share enough to admire it. Some are captivated by hands that can wield the rod, which in earlier days they escaped to their cost. In the case of General Ople it was partly her whippings of him, partly her penetration, her ability, that sat so finely on a wealthy woman; her indifference to conventional manners, that so well beseemed a nobly born one, and more than all, her correction of his little weaknesses and incompetencies, in spite of his dislike of it, won him. He began to feel a sort of nibbling pleasure in her grotesque sketches of his person; a tendency to recur to the old ones, while dreading the arrival of new. You hear old gentlemen speak fondly of the switch; and they are not attached to pain, but the instrument revives their feeling of youth; and General Ople half enjoyed, while shrinking, Lady Camper's foregone out-

lines of him. For in the distance, the whip's end may look like a clinging caress instead of a stinging flick. But this craven melting in his heart was rebuked by a very worthy pride, that flew for support to the injury she had done to his devotions and the offense to the sacred edifice. After thinking over it he decided that he must quit his residence; and as it appeared to him in the light of a duty, with an unspoken anguish, commissioned the house-agent of his town to sell his lease or let the house furnished, without further parley.

From the house-agent's shop he turned into the chemist's for a tonic—a foolish proceeding—for he had received bracing enough in the blow he had just dealt himself, but he had been cogitating on tonics recently, imagining certain valiant effects of them, with visions of a former careless happiness that they were likely to restore. So he requested to have the tonic strong, and he took one glass of it over the counter.

Fifteen minutes after the draught he came

in sight of his house, and beholding it, he could have called it a gentlemanly residence aloud under Lady Camper's windows, his insurgency was of such violence. He talked of it incessantly, but forebore to tell Elizabeth, as she was looking pale, the reason why its modest merits touched him so. He longed for the hour of his next dose, and for a caricature to follow, that he might drink and defy it. A caricature was really due to him, he thought; otherwise why had he abandoned his *bijou* dwelling. Lady Camper, however, sent none. He had to wait a fortnight before one came, and that was rather a likeness, and a handsome likeness, except as regarded a certain disorderliness in his dress, which he knew to be very unlike him. Still it dispatched him to the looking-glass, to bring that verifier of fact in evidence against the sketch. While sitting there he heard the house-maid's knock at the door, and the strange intelligence that his daughter was with Lady Camper, and had left word that she hoped he would not forget

his engagement to go to Mrs. Baerens' lawn-party.

The general jumped away from the glass, censuring the absent Elizabeth in a fit of wrath so foreign to him that he returned hurriedly to have another look at himself, and exclaimed at the pitch of his voice: "I say, I attribute it to an indigestion of that tonic. Do you hear?" The house-maid faintly answered outside the door that she did, alarming him, for there seemed to be confusion somewhere. His hope was that no one would mention Lady Camper's name, for the mere thought of her caused a rush to his head. "I believe I am in for a touch of apoplexy," he said to the rector, who greeted him, in advance of the ladies, on Mrs. Baerens' lawn. He said it smilingly, but wanting some show of sympathy, instead of the whisper and meaningless hand at his clerical band, with which the rector responded, he cried, "Apoplexy," and his friend seemed then to understand, and disappeared among the ladies.

Several of them surrounded the general, and one inquired whether the series was being continued. He drew forth his pocket-book, handed her the latest, and remarked on the gross injustice of it; for, as he requested them to take the note, her ladyship now sketched him as a person inattentive to his dress, and he begged them to observe that she had drawn him with his neck-tie hanging loose. "And that—I say that has never been known of me since I first entered society."

The ladies exchanged looks of profound concern, for the fact was, the general had come without any necktie and any collar, and he appeared to be unaware of the circumstance. The rector had told them that, in answer to a hint he had dropped on the subject of neck-ties, General Ople expressed a slight apprehension of apoplexy; but his careless or merely partial observance of the laws of buttonment could have nothing to do with such fears. They signified rather a disorder of the intelligence. Elizabeth was condemned for leaving him to

go about alone. The situation was really most painful, for a word to so sensitive a man would drive him away in shame and for good; and still, to let him parade the ground in the state, compared with his natural self, of scarecrow, and with the dreadful habit of talking to himself quite raging, was a horrible alternative. Mrs. Baerens at last directed her husband upon the general, trembling as though she watches for the operations of a fish torpedo; and other ladies shared her excessive anxiousness, for Mr. Baerens had the manner and look of artillery, and on this occasion carried a surcharge of powder.

The general bent his ear to Mr. Baerens, whose German-English and repeated remark, "I am to do it wid delicassy," did not assist his comprehension, and when he might have been enlightened, he was petrified by seeing Lady Camper walk on the lawn with Elizabeth. The great lady stood a moment beside Mrs. Baerens; she came straight over to him, contemplating him in silence.

Then she said, "Your arm, General Ople," and she made one circuit of the lawn with him, barely speaking.

At her request he conducted her to her carriage. He took a seat beside her, obediently. He felt that he was being sketched, and comported himself like a child's flat man, that jumps at the pulling of a string.

"Where have you left your girl, general?" Before he could rally his wits to answer the question, he was asked:

"And what have you done with your neck-tie and collar?"

He touched his throat.

"I am rather nervous to-day; I forgot, Elizabeth," he said, sending his fingers in a dotting run of wonderment round his neck.

Lady Camper smiled with a triumphing humor on her close-drawn lips.

The verified absence of neck-tie and collar seemed to be choking him.

"Never mind, you have been abroad without them," said Lady Camper, "and that is

a victory for me. And you thought of Elizabeth first when I drew your attention to it, and that is a victory for you. It is a very great victory. Pray do not be dismayed, general. You have a handsome campaigning air. And no apologies, if you please; I like you well enough as you are. There is my hand."

General Ople understood her last remark. He pressed the lady's hand in silence very nervously.

"But do not shrug your head into your shoulders as if there were any possibility of concealing the thunderingly evident," said Lady Camper, electrifying him what with her cordial squeeze, her kind eyes, and her singular language. "You have omitted the collar. Well?' The collar is the fatal finishing touch in men's dress; it would make Apollo look *bourgeois.*"

Her hand was in his; and watching the play of her features, a spark entered General Ople's brain, causing him, in forgetfulness of collar and caricatures, to ejaculate:

"Seventy? Did your ladyship say seventy? Utterly impossible! You trifled with me."

"We will talk when we are free of this accompaniment of carriage-wheels, general," said Lady Camper.

"I will beg permission to go and fetch Elizabeth, madame."

"Rightly thought of. Fetch her in my carriage. And, by the way, Mrs. Baerens was my old music-mistress, and is, I think, one year older than I. She can tell you on which side of seventy I am."

"I shall not require to ask, my lady," he said, sighing.

"Then we will send the carriage for Elizabeth, and have it out together at once. I am impatient; yes, general, impatient—for what? forgiveness."

"Of me, my lady?" The general breathed profoundly.

"Of whom else? Do you know what it is? I don't think you do. You English have the smallest experience of humanity. I mean this:

to strike so hard that, in the end, you soften your heart to the victim. Well, that is my weakness. And we of our blood put no restraint on the blows we strike, so we are always overdoing it."

General Ople assisted Lady Camper to alight from the carriage, which was forthwith dispatched for Elizabeth.

He prepared to listen to her with a disconnected smile of acute attentiveness.

She had changed. She spoke of money. Ten thousand pounds must be settled on his daughter. "And now," said she, "you will remember that you are wanting a collar."

He acquiesced. He craved permission to retire for ten minutes.

"Simplest of men! What will cover you?" she exclaimed, and peremptorily bidding him sit down in the drawing-room she took one of the famous pair of pistols in her hand, and said: "If I put myself in a similar position, and make myself *décolletée*, too, will that satisfy you? You see these murderous weapons?

Well, I am a coward. I dread fire-arms. They are hid there to impose on the world, and I believe they do. They have imposed on you. Now you would never think of pretending to a moral quality you do not possess. But, silly, simple man that you are! you can give yourself the airs of wealth, buy horses to conceal your nakedness, and when you are taken upon the standard of your apparent income, you would rather seem to be beating a miserly retreat than behave frankly and honestly. I have a little overstated it, but I am near the mark."

"Your ladyship wanting courage!" cried the general.

"Refresh yourself by meditating on it," said she. "And to prove it to you, I was glad to take this house when I knew I was to have a gallant gentleman for a neighbor. No visitors will be admitted, General Ople, so you are bare-throated only to me — sit quietly. One day you speculated on the paint on my cheeks for the space of a minute and a half—

I had said that I freckled easily. Your look signified that you really could not detect a single freckle for the paint. I forgave you, or I did not. But when I found you, on closer acquaintance, as indifferent to your daughter's happiness as you had been to her reputation—"

"My daughter! her reputation! her happiness!"

General Ople raised his eyes under a wave, half uttering the outcries.

"So indifferent to her reputation that you allowed a young man to talk with her over the wall, and meet her by appointment: so reckless of the girl's happiness that when I tried to bring you to a treaty on her behalf, you could not be dragged from thinking of yourself and your own affairs. When I found that, perhaps I was predisposed to give you some of what my sisters used to call my spice. You would not honestly state the proportions of your income, and you affected to be faithful to the woman of seventy. Most

preposterous! Could any caricature of mine exceed in grotesqueness your sketch of yourself? You are a brave and a generous man all the same; and I suspect it is more hoodwinking than egotism—or extreme egotism—that blinds you. A certain amount you must have to be a man. You did not like my paint, still less did you like my sincerity; you were annoyed by my corrections of your habits of speech; you were horrified by the age of seventy, and you were credulous. General Ople, listen to me, and remember that you have no collar on! you were credulous of my statement of my great age, or you chose to be so, or chose to seem so because I had brushed your cat's coat against the fur. And then, full of yourself, not thinking of Elizabeth, but to withdraw in the chivalrous attitude of the man true to his word to the old woman, only stickling to bring a certain independence to the common stock, because—I quote you, and you have no collar on, mind—'you could not be at your wife's mercy,' you broke from your

proposal on the money question. Where was your consideration for Elizabeth then? Well, general, you were fond of thinking of yourself, and I thought I would assist you. I gave you plenty of subject matter. I will not say I meant to work a homeopathic cure. But if I drive you to forget your collar is it or is it not a triumph? No," added Lady Camper, "it is no triumph for me; but it is one for you, if you like to make the most of it. Your fault has been to quit active service, general, and love your ease too well. It is the fault of your countrymen. You must get a militia regiment, or inspectorship of militia. You are ten times the man in exercise. Why, do you mean to tell me that you would have cared for those drawings of mine when marching?"

"I think so—I say I think so," remarked the general, seriously.

"I doubt it," said she. "But to the point: here comes Elizabeth. If you have not much money to spare for her, according to

your prudent calculation, reflect how this money has enfeebled you and reduced you to the level of the people round about us here—who are what? Inhabitants of gentlemanly residences—yes! But what kind of creatures? They have no mental standard, no moral aim, no native chivalry. You were rapidly becoming one of them, only, fortunately for you, you were sensitive to ridicule."

"Elizabeth shall have half my money settled on her," said the general; "though I fear it is not much. And if I can find occupation, my lady—"

"Something worthier than *that*," said Lady Camper, penciling outlines rapidly on the margin of a book, and he saw himself lashing a pony; "or *that*," and he was plucking at a cabbage; "or *that*," and he was bowing to three petticoated posts.

"The likeness is exact," General Ople groaned.

"So you may suppose I have studied you," said she. "But there is no real likeness.

Slight exaggerations do more harm to truth than reckless violations of it. You would not have cared one bit for a caricature if you had not nursed the absurd idea of being one of our conquerors. It is the very tragedy of modesty for a man like you to have such notions, my poor dear good friend. The modest are the most easily intoxicated when they sip at vanity. And reflect whether you have not been intoxicated; for these young people have been wretched, and you have not observed it, though one of them was living with you, and is the child you love. There, I have done. Pray show a good face to Elizabeth."

The general obeyed as well as he could. He felt very like a sheep that has come from a shearing, and when released he wished to run away. But hardly had he escaped before he had a desire for the renewal of the operation. "She sees me through, she sees me through," he was heard saying to himself; and in the end he taught himself to say it with a secret exultation, for as it was on her part an ex-

traordinary piece of insight to see him through, it struck him that in acknowledging the truth of it he made a discovery of new powers in human nature.

General Ople studied Lady Camper diligently for fresh proofs of her penetration of the mysteries in his bosom, by which means, as it happened that she was diligently observing the two betrothed young ones, he began to watch them likewise, and took pleasure in the sight. Their meetings, their partings, their rides out and home, furnished him themes of converse. He soon had enough to talk of, and previously, as he remembered, he had never sustained a conversation of any length with composure and the beneficent sense of fullness. Five thousand pounds, to which sum Lady Camper reduced her stipulation for Elizabeth's dowry, he signed over to his dear girl gladly, and came out with the confession to her ladyship that a well-invested twelve thousand comprised his fortune. She shrugged; she had left off pulling him this

way and that, so his chains were enjoyable; and he said to himself: "If ever she should in the dead of night want a man to defend her!" He mentioned it to Reginald, who had been the repository of Elizabeth's lamentations about her father being left alone, forsaken, and the young man conceived a scheme for causing his aunt's great bell to be rung at midnight, which would certainly have led to a dramatic issue and the happy re-establishment of our masculine ascendency at the close of this history. But he forgot it, in his bridegroom's delight, until he was making his miserable official speech at the wedding-breakfast, and set Elizabeth winking over a tear. As she stood in the hall ready to depart, a great van was observed in the road at the gates of Douro Lodge; and this the men in custody declared to contain the goods and knick-knacks of the people who had taken the house furnished for a year, and were coming in that very afternoon.

"I remember—I say now I remember—I

had a notice," the general said, cheerily, to his troubled daughter.

"But where are you to go, papa?" the poor girl cried, close on sobbing.

"I shall get employment of some sort," said he. "I was saying I want it, I need it, I require it."

"You are saying three times what once would have sufficed for," said Lady Camper, and she asked him a few questions, frowned with a smile, and offered him a lodgment in his neighbor's house.

"Really, dearest Aunt Angela?" said Elizabeth.

"What else can I do, child? I have, it seems, driven him out of a gentlemanly residence, and I must give him a lady-like one. True, I would rather have had him at call, but as I have always wished for a policeman in the house, I may as well be satisfied with a soldier."

"But if you lose your character, my lady?" said Reginald.

"Then I must look to the general to restore it."

General Ople immediately bowed his head over Lady Camper's fingers.

"An odd thing to happen to a woman of forty-one!" she said to her great people; and they submitted with the best grace in the world, while the general's ears tingled till he felt younger than Reginald. This—his reflections ran, or it would be more correct to say waltzed—this is the result of painting! that you can believe a woman to be any age when her cheeks are tinted!

As for Lady Camper, she had been floated accidentally over the ridicule of the bruit of a marriage at a time of life as terrible to her as her fiction of seventy had been to General Ople; she resigned herself to let things go with the tide. She had not been blissful in her first marriage, she had abandoned the chase of an ideal man, and she had found one who was tunable so as not to offend her ears—likely ever to be a fund of amusement for her humor

—good, impressible, and, above all, very picturesque. There is the secret of her and of how it came to pass that a simple man and a complex woman fell to union after the strangest division.

THE END.

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